

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST
COMMONWEALTH HONORS COLLEGE (CHC) COUNCIL

The charge of the Commonwealth Honors College Council is to provide advice to the Dean on all matters relating to the administration of the Honors College, its curriculum and policy, including;

- honors course approvals;
- standards governing the establishment, modification and termination of all Departmental Honors and Multidisciplinary Honors programs;
- standards governing CHC student admission and graduation; and
- standards governing and the direction of Honors theses/projects and independent studies.

Minutes

Date **April 8, 2024 12:20–2:00 PM**

Location **via Zoom** <https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/j/92399061648?pwd=NUpjbjcvQ3R0S3IRS0s0UjVfEd0QQT09>

Meeting ID: 923 9906 1648 **Passcode:** 029937

Approve Minutes Minutes are unanimously approved.

Announcements

Updates from the Dean (*Elena Carbone*)

1. MassURC is April 19, 2024 at the Campus Center. The conference is entirely in person and this year we have 138 faculty sponsors with 171 presenters and are expecting about 1,000 attendees. Council members are encouraged to attend the conference as well as the after event.
2. The new Student Success position is moving forward, Dominick Usher and Elena Carbone will be on the search committee. There has been a good response rate so far. This position will coordinate RAP programs and other collaborations across campus, and will report to Dominick Usher.

New Business

1. Discussion about ScholarWorks transition (*Erin Jerome/Jennifer Friedman*)
 - a. ScholarWorks will migrate to DSpace which is community governed. The final export of contents from Digital Commons will take place April 15-30 and troubleshooting and cleanup will occur May 2024. Anticipate going live June 2024; need to be off the current platform by June 30, 2024.
 - b. Will be ready to start the process for creating CHC thesis collection in late fall 2024.
 - c. Questions for CHC
 - i. Which theses should be added to the collection? What will the access type be? What are the accessibility standards? What is the submission process? Creative Commons Licenses and Digital Object Identifiers?
 - ii. Different options for which theses would be uploaded
 1. Mandatory submissions – all students must submit
 2. Optional submissions – students opt into submitting
 3. Exemplary Theses only – this has been the plan and will in theory continue to be the plan.
 - a. Differences between Exemplar Theses and Exemplary Theses
 - i. Exemplar = theses to show to students as examples of a typical, good thesis
 - ii. Exemplary = above and beyond
 - b. CHC chooses a group of exemplary theses to submit to ScholarWorks annually.

4. Why not upload all theses?
 - a. All theses will still come to the library for archiving, ScholarWorks will be an additional step.
 - b. Not all theses are given the same degree of attention as others
 - i. There are a whole variety of things (grammar, spelling, correct citations, etc.) that might disqualify a thesis for inclusion in ScholarWorks.
 - ii. Not every thesis can go into ScholarWorks since these are being published and distributed and people off-campus could potentially access them.
 - iii. Not every thesis is individual – would need to get approval from each collaborative member
5. Faculty and HPDs can recommend a thesis as Exemplary when the manuscript is submitted by the student on PATHS.
6. What is the quota for “exemplary” theses to be included each year?
7. Suggestion for committees for thesis seminars to recommend theses from the seminars as exemplary.
- iii. Access Options
 1. Open access – anyone in the world has access
 2. Campus access – only UMass affiliated users can download and read. Other users can request. This access can be permanent or temporary.
 3. Embargoes – only administrators can access the thesis until the embargo lifts. The maximum embargo length supported by the software is 5 years (60 months)
 - a. This is an important later, but ideally we could have a simpler system for set up
 - i. Sometimes students are surprised by their paper having an embargo, is there a way to communicate this earlier?
- iv. Other notes about ScholarWorks
 1. It is a permanent upload, not a website.
 2. Do PDFs pass standard accessibility checks?
 - a. This would depend on self-disclosure, the library does not have the staffing to check each individual manuscript.
 - b. Can we require specific formatting for increased accessibility? UMass is switching to requiring all PDFs to meet specific accessibility standards.
 3. How will creative portfolios be shared?
 4. Clarification: copies of all theses are saved in the archives, at CHC, and ScholarWorks is an extra saving for “bragging” about our students.
- v. Submission options
 1. Self-service – students submit the thesis themselves.
 2. CHC faculty/staff panel reviews theses and submits them to ScholarWorks.
 3. Library submits – CHC sends all theses to the library, and the library submits and approves.
- vi. Creative Commons and Digital Object Identifiers
 1. A few Creative Commons License options are available to students
 - a. By default, anyone will have to cite it.
 - b. Specifies requirements on distribution, citations, quotations, etc.
 2. DOI
 - a. Library is a member of DataSite

- b. All graduate level theses have this – would like to apply this to honors theses as well.

2. Review of feedback from honors thesis workshops (*Elena Carbone*)

- a. The workshop format has shifted over time. Remote hosting, use of Navigate, and publicizing in the weekly newsletter has drastically increased numbers. Typically the workshop is 45 minutes for presentation and 15 minutes for questions. The presentation is uploaded to YouTube without the discussion and no student info is included.
- b. Fall 2023 topics
 - i. Thesis 101 (usually has the highest attendance)
 - ii. What I Wish I Had Known – student-led panel discussion, very popular
 - iii. Understanding the PATHS system and the IRB system
- c. Numbers for Fall 2023
 - i. 512 registrants, 225 attendees, 47 survey responses
 - ii. 59.6% of attendees were juniors (target audience)
 - iii. Pretty evenly distributed by size of colleges
 - 1. If we find low attendance in certain areas, we adjust publicity for that section
 - iv. Target population is Spring 2025 grad date and/or Junior credit status (57-86 credits in the F23 semester). This is about 700 students.
 - v. Why in person vs online?
 - 1. First seminar was always standing room only, but dropped off after that. Ambiguous as to why some were highly attended vs low attendance.
 - 2. Asked students what they would want
 - 3. Much higher number of registrants and attendees when online
 - 4. Ability to record and return to students to review as a resource
 - vi. Survey
 - 1. Confidence in understanding what an honors thesis is
 - a. 68% confident to very confident
 - 2. Confidence in ability to complete an honors thesis
 - a. Lower responses primarily from first and second years
 - b. 51% confident to very confident
 - 3. 65% had attended multiple workshops
 - a. Responses neutral to positive for both new attendees and returning attendees.
 - 4. How helpful?
 - a. 98% found it very or somewhat helpful.
 - 5. What did you find most helpful?
 - a. Thesis examples and discussion of flexible options

- b. Q/A time
 - c. Depth of content covered
 - d. Action steps provided
 - e. Student stories and opinions
6. What could we do better?
- a. More STEM examples
 - b. Provide an optional timeline/checklist for people trying to schedule planning.
 - c. How to reach out to professors and confirm their involvement; format proposals; more detailed parts of the process.
 - d. Departmental vs Multidisciplinary
 - e. Breaking down the mass of information
 - f. Having panelists that are further along in their thesis journey or have finished
 - g. Perspective of a student in a seminar instead of independently contracted theses
 - h. Students who publish or plan on publishing their thesis
 - i. More live demonstrations
7. The new Student Success position will be working on the workshops as well.
8. E. Carbone is working with advisors to find a pool of students to find a diverse variety of examples – independent theses, creative portfolios, seminars.
9. CHC is working on publicizing the creative portfolio option. “Honors thesis” is the umbrella term, options are traditional research manuscript or honors creative portfolio. The terminology can be confusing, so we are always trying to improve this.

3. Honors Course Review (*Dominick Usher*)

- HISTORY 150H, 4 credits, reapproval
- HISTORY 337AH, 4 credits, reapproval
- HISTORY 338H, 4 credits, reapproval
- HISTORY 428H, 4 credits, reapproval
- The consent agenda is unanimously approved.

Committee Reports

Reports from CHC Council Representatives on other Councils

1. Academic Standards Committee Review (*Elena Carbone*)
- a. Still a few proposals coming in for Spring 2024.
 - b. Next month we will have multi-year data and more trends.
 - c. More 499Ys in fall semesters, more 499Ts in spring semesters.

- d. Distribution by college is generally consistent with numbers of CHC students in each college. How can we recruit more ASC members that more accurately reflect the distribution of independent theses across the colleges?
- e. Casey and Peter have vastly improved efficiency of the independent thesis proposal process.

2. Academic Matters Council (*Dominick Usher*)

- a. AMC meeting covered course & program reviews. A big topic of conversation was recommendations for what would be listed by faculty senate on syllabi minimum standards recommendations and requirements. Final edits were approved and sent to the Faculty Senate and will likely be reviewed in May. Currently, the only three requirements are legal statements about accommodations, Title IX, and academic honesty; the academic honesty/integrity piece is being revised. AMC is planning on creating a template that would be easily uploaded to Canvas.
 - i. Concerns about theses – is there an academic freedom piece? Will the statements be written out in the syllabus or will they be a link to a webpage?
 - ii. There is little to no data on how students engage with syllabi. In general, they don't engage with the syllabus in the way we want them to. Students often ask questions that are easily answered by referring to the syllabus. The professor's expectations are expressed in the syllabus.
 - iii. There are a wide range of opinions on this issue.
 - iv. Why isn't there a place where these statements apply to the whole university, separate from the syllabus?
 - v. E. Carbone gives students extra credit for reading through the whole syllabus and answering an embedded question to show they have done that.
 - vi. Ideally, instructions on how to utilize syllabi are included in onboarding.
- b. Rules Committee (*Tony Paik*)
 - i. The Rules Committee is discussing 499 seminars, as the Rules Committee determines the distribution of work. The current credit increase policy is that any request for additional credits must be approved; wanted AMC to have an opportunity to review.
 - ii. Generally, the Rules Committee is against 6 credit seminars and strongly against 8 credit 499 seminars. There is the beginning of a broader discussion about 499 seminars. The two that have been registered as 8 credits have been under the recommendation of the Registrar. Since these courses have already been approved, how do we adjust these now?
 - iii. Will be meeting with the Faculty Senate, Provost, and Dean Castañeda to discuss these issues.

3. Research Council (*Thomas Brashear-Alejandro*)

- a. Tabled

Next Meeting

May 13, 2024, 12:20-2:00 pm, **Hybrid, CHC Events Hall & Zoom**

<https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/j/92399061648?pwd=NUpjicvQ3R0S3lRS0s0UUVFdEd0QT09>

Meeting ID: 923 9906 1648 Passcode: 029937

Attachments

- Honors Course Review materials
- Minutes from 3/11/2024 meeting